

Security Cooperation in Support of Theater Strategy

**Lieutenant Colonel Michael Hartmayer, U.S. Army, Retired, and
Lieutenant Colonel John Hansen, U.S. Army, Retired**

Our ability to sustain . . . alliances, and to build coalitions of support toward common objectives, depends in part on the capabilities of America's Armed Forces. Similarly, the relationships our Armed Forces have developed with foreign militaries are a critical component of our global engagement and support our collective security.

— National Security Strategy, May 2010¹

Lieutenant Colonel Michael Hartmayer, Retired, is a senior military analyst at the Center for Army Lessons Learned at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and a former Deputy G5 (Strategy Plans and Policy) of U.S. Army Africa.

Lieutenant Colonel John Hansen, Retired, is the chief of strategy and policy for U.S. Army Europe.

PHOTO: ADM James G. Stavridis, commander, NATO Supreme Allied Command (far right); LTG John M. Paxton, Jr., commander, Marine Forces Europe (second from the right); and LTG Mark P. Hertling, commander, U.S. Army Europe (second from the left), receive an overview of the Stryker vehicle's capabilities during the Combatant Commander's Conference, 22 August 2012.

THE EXECUTION OF SECURITY COOPERATION in the service component commands around the globe is an evolving process that occurs in many forms and utilizes a myriad of methods. Requests for assistance for security forces also come in many forms. They may be country or country-team-nominated; they may be at the request of an international organization (e.g., UN, NATO) or subregional organization (e.g., European Union, African Union); they may be directed by Office of the Secretary of Defense, service headquarters, or geographic combatant commands; or they could be requested by a sister service component. However, the huge number of events, the variety of outside actors with separate agendas, and the difficulty in linking these actions and activities to strategy create a challenging environment in which to execute a coherent plan. The problem for the strategist is to synergize or fashion these efforts and players through a process that supports the commander's goals and objectives.

Key Components of Security Cooperation

The purpose of this article is to identify and link the key components of security cooperation and strategy development processes for those outside the small group of practitioners who wrestle with them normally. Critical steps in building and maintaining a viable theater level strategy are listed below:

- Set the theater security cooperation strategy.
- Align, develop, and prioritize security cooperation activities within the theater.
- Use the security cooperation planning process.

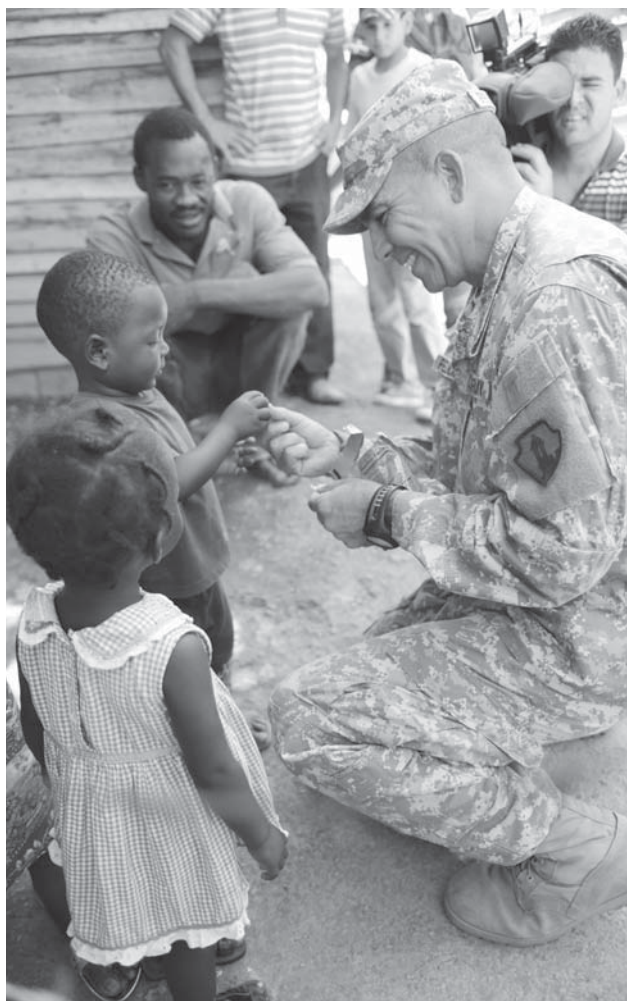
| Report Documentation Page | | | | Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188 | |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
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| 1. REPORT DATE FEB 2013 | | 2. REPORT TYPE | | 3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2013 to 00-00-2013 | |
| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Security Cooperation in Support of Theater Strategy | | | | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5b. GRANT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER | |
| 6. AUTHOR(S) | | | | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5e. TASK NUMBER | |
| | | | | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER | |
| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, Military Review, Truesdell Hall, 290 Stimson Ave., Unit 2, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 66027 | | | | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER | |
| 9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) | | | | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) | |
| | | | | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) | |
| 12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited | | | | | |
| 13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES | | | | | |
| 14. ABSTRACT | | | | | |
| 15. SUBJECT TERMS | | | | | |
| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR) | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES 6 | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON |
| a. REPORT unclassified | b. ABSTRACT unclassified | c. THIS PAGE unclassified | | | |

All are critical steps to build and maintain a viable theater-level strategy. The challenge at the component level is planning with and synchronizing a large number of activities and agencies. When coordinating with his parent service or higher headquarters, the strategist often finds a “map with a thousand pins” approach to security cooperation. Briefings often include multiple screenshots of the Theater Security Cooperation Management Information System or similar databases on which maps of countries or regions suddenly become filled with thousands of map pins depicting the entire spectrum of U.S. military activity from conference attendance to major exercises. This gives the impression of a robust and creative Theater Security Cooperation program, when in reality the activities may be of little substance and require minimal coordination. Even if a command’s staff fully understands security cooperation strategy and planning and also executes it well, it can become an ad hoc or purposeless drill if the staff ignores or loses its expertise. The process needs codifying in doctrine and standard operating procedure publications to make it deliberate, much the way the Army has ingrained the military decision making process into generations of officers. The benefit of a successful Theater Security Cooperation strategy or Phase 0 concept plan ultimately is conflict avoidance, so we must resource Theater Security Cooperation.

To set the stage for understanding security cooperation in the context of theater strategy, it is important to be familiar with the historical context. The geographic combatant commands have had authority and responsibility for theater engagement planning since 1948 under the Unified Command Plan.² The geographic combatant commands’ appreciation of security cooperation necessarily starts with an understanding of the National Defense Strategy. The strategic environment portrayed in the National Defense Strategy identifies a spectrum of challenges, including violent transnational extremist networks, hostile states armed with weapons of mass destruction, rising regional powers, natural and pandemic disasters, and a growing competition for resources. Climate, demographic, and environmental challenges, along with globalization and increasing economic interdependence, create an environment characterized by uncertainty and risks.

Guidance for Employment

Building on the National Defense Strategy, the Guidance for Employment of the Force takes this strategic guidance and consolidates and integrates it into a single, overarching document. The Guidance for Employment of the Force provides strategic policy guidance. The Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan, its companion document, provides the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff implementing guidance and formally tasks the development of specific campaign, campaign support, and contingency plans. Importantly, the Guidance for Employment



LTC Louis Feliciano, commander of the 393rd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, Army Reserve-Puerto Rico, shares the contents of a Meal Ready to Eat with children, during the Beyond the Horizon mission, conducted in the Dominican Republic in coordination with U.S. Southern Command, 19 May 2011. (U.S. Army)

of the Force transitions DOD planning from a contingency-centric approach to a strategy-centric approach.

Restated in clearer terms, the Guidance for Employment of the Force approaches planning from the perspective of achieving broad theater or functional end states, not contingencies. Notably, the guidance contains the requirement for geographic combatant commands to develop campaign plans that integrate and synchronize the “steady-state” activities and operations they must perform to achieve the regional or functional end states specified in the Guidance for Employment of the Force. This is the mandate for the Theater Security Cooperation Support plan at the service component command level. Critically, for the service component commander as part of the joint team, the emphasis in the Guidance for Employment of the Force on “steady-state” activities to achieve end states and objectives reflects the centrality of security cooperation activities in our national strategic guidance documents.

To understand where steady-state security cooperation fits in the service component commander’s mission essential tasks, it is important to understand what we have asked him to accomplish. In simple terms, he must support ongoing operations, fulfill Title 10 U.S.C. responsibilities; be prepared to deploy a contingency command post (previously a JTF-capable headquarters), and, execute theater security cooperation missions. Arguably, security cooperation is the most important because it is a condition-setter and enabler for the other three tasks. The definition in JP 1-02 describes how it performs as an enabler for the other three tasks:

*All Department of Defense interactions with foreign defense establishments build defense relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access to a host nation.*³

To build on the above definition and to better align security cooperation activities with theater strategy, a process is necessary to avoid the “pins on the map” analogy. The nuances of the process may differ from command to command and service to service, but there are basic parts that should look the same regardless of service

or location. The Army’s targeting methodology (decide, detect, deliver, and assess) is a time-tested model that can serve as a foundation upon which to base the process.⁴ The creativity of the service component commander and staff is the only limit on the development of theater- or service-specific security cooperation planning models or methods. What is important about any process is that it accomplishes what the commander needs it to accomplish. We can envision this process in its simplest form as a matching game—a column of security activities on the left, matched or paired against a column of theater strategic objectives on the right. The synchronization of strategy and security cooperation hinges on several key activities: identification of component supporting objectives, identification of requirements, prioritization of countries and resources, and assessment.

Objectives

The development of component security cooperation objectives (effects or goals, depending on the doctrinal perspective) facilitates synchronizing the myriad efforts. Development of proper objectives facilitates and encourages the linkage of action to the geographic combatant command’s theater security objectives. Ideally, these objectives would be purpose-focused and linked to the commander’s intent for security cooperation. While not an exhaustive list, some purpose-based objectives include gaining access, improving regional

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U.S. force readiness, building partner capacity, increasing interoperability in assigned regions, strengthening partner relationships, and improving partner nation leadership and ministries. Identifying objectives also helps develop task sets and allows planners to focus their efforts.

We deem that certain operations, activities, and actions aligned with the task set, and then



(U.S. Navy, MCSN Kevin T. Murray, Jr., USN)

The “Sea Knights” of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 22 transfer stores from the Military Sealift Command fast-combat support ship USNS Arctic (T-AOE 8) to the flight deck of the Nimitz-class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75) during a vertical replenishment-at-sea. The USS *Truman* is assigned to 6th Fleet and was conducting theater security cooperative activities in the eastern Mediterranean, 29 November 2007.

we prioritize them. Prioritization leads to concept development, followed by assessment. From a doctrinal perspective, these tasks could be part of the Universal Joint Task List along with measures and criteria. Verb tense aside—the most important criterion for a task will be linking the activity to posture requirements and overseas bases such as cooperative security locations and forward operating sites. Security cooperation activities should also incorporate national requirements and link joint and combined exercises with day-to-day events and contingency plans.

A successful security cooperation planning process will curtail purposeless or episodic activities with limited potential for long-term impact—in effect, bringing a common sense approach to the “pins on the map” analogy. Maneuver officers will recognize this as the purpose side of the task and

purpose approach—because the main question the security cooperation planner and strategist must ask himself is “Why?” Why are we doing this activity, and how does it support our goals and objectives in theater? The best way to get after the answer to this question is to prioritize—allowing the matching of valuable security cooperation resources against outcomes or effects in countries deemed important. The prioritization process can be as simple or complex as the planner desires it to be, but in general terms, it should prioritize activities and countries to determine where to best spend the command’s security cooperation dollars. Activities with a low “why” score should be at the bottom of the “to do” list, or disappear altogether.

The criteria against which we measure security cooperation activities and countries may vary from theater to theater. However, in a generic sense they

could align with the Guidance for Employment of the Force, support specific theater objectives and outcomes or end states, service partnership guidance, follow guidance from the geographic combatant commands, use country prioritization or commander's intent, constrain themselves to set fiscal resources, obey authorities conducting the engagement, link to other events, respond to the source of the requirement, or take advantage of potential opportunity for "real world" linkage.⁵ Once we evaluate these events, the next step in many commands is for a requirements board or its equivalent at the geographic combatant command and service component command level to vet it.

A successful prioritization process should result in a prioritized list of theater security events—e.g., military-to-military relationships, foreign military sales, and senior leader engagements, exercises—that will focus the command's fiscal and planning efforts. If the activity, event, or requirement is valid, then it generates a concept, or plan, a staff lead is assigned, and the general support of the staff is employed to make the event a success. Critically, operations, activities, and actions and concepts that do not meet planning guidance or priorities are eliminated and purposeless or episodic activities therein with limited potential for long-term impacts are curtailed.

To understand how well these activities meet the service component commander's objectives and support the security cooperation intent, we must assess all events against the goals and objectives identified in the theater campaign plan for the geographic combatant command and the theater campaign support plan for the service component command. After action reports and trip reports are vital to the service component command's strategy development efforts. The assessments inform campaign plans, facilitate adjustments to the integrated priority list and comprehensive joint assessment, and help refine resource requirements. Ultimately, the objective is to inform the service component command leadership on the progress of the mission and the status of effects in support of desired outcomes, strategic objectives, or goals. This process should be quantitative and link the key tasks, objectives, lines of effort, partner nations, and operations, activities, and actions so the command can develop theater priorities in terms of objectives

for each partner nation and determine whether the efforts and activities synchronize with the priorities.

Trends

During a cycle of constrained defense spending, we cannot be everything to everyone. A commander's most important security cooperation decision is where to spend his resources to most effectively

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support theater and national security priorities. Although the United States conducts security cooperation to assure creation of a dominant coalition, enhance its influence, and gain regional access and access to decision makers, we may not have the processes and systems in place to execute an effective security cooperation strategy. In this era of a new fiscal reality, we will need to better manage, align, and synchronize security cooperation resources. The development of these resources is paramount to being proper stewards.

There are two key trends, both with negative connotations, that we need to address. The first is the tendency to accept quantity over quality. The number of engagements in a certain country has little bearing on the effectiveness in an overarching strategy. The second trend is failing to define future security cooperation strategy beyond that of our most recent experiences in Iraq or Afghanistan. Building a security force is far different from building and maintaining a coalition.

The fact that there may be several hundred "engagements" with a specific country may be a great data point, but it should raise further questions for the strategist. He should focus on the quality of the engagements as they affect larger strategy. The service should prioritize the types of engagements as part of a global strategy that addresses gaps or shortfalls and weighs resources to accomplish that strategy. For example, the National Security Strategy states, "Our ability to sustain these alliances, and to build coalitions of support toward common objectives, depends in part on the capabilities of

America's Armed Forces. Similarly, the relationships our Armed Forces have developed with foreign militaries are a critical component of our global engagement and support our collective security."⁶ The services should define the broader strategy of how they fit into the National Security Strategy and how they intend to allocate the strategy to the theaters along with the resources.

Our most recent prominent reference point should not impede our ability to look at future requirements. The capability to build a security force from nothing is a component of a larger strategy, and should not necessarily be the primary focus. Interoperability with capable allies and partners requires mission command and operational units to ensure future coalitions integrate quickly and operate across the spectrum of operations. Improving and, in some cases, sustaining interoperability with future coalition partners is more complex and perhaps more expensive than teaching individual skills and small unit tactics, but remains a vital investment in our national security and ultimately provides significant and often overlooked cost savings. An example is current NATO contributions to ISAF. Approximately

85 percent of contributing members to ISAF are NATO allies contributing the equivalent of 8 to 10 brigades' worth of forces.⁷ Those forces occupy battle space and execute missions that U.S. forces would otherwise be required to execute. Coalition operations will remain the norm, and activities focusing on enhanced proficiency and increased interoperability with allies will pay off many times over in the future.

Ultimately, the goal of theater security cooperation is to improve national security through well-postured, prepared, and interoperable partners. Synchronized and nested phase zero operations are a vital component in preventing the requirement for later phases. A clear, coordinated strategy with measurable end states applied to security cooperation at the theater and national levels will assure the execution of a broader national security strategy. While acknowledging the current superb security cooperation activities going on around the globe, it's clear that a well considered and understood security cooperation planning methodology will bring about successful execution with maximum efficiency and ensure we expend resources only on activities that will achieve the desired results. **MR**

NOTES

1. The White House, National Security Strategy, May 2010, 41.
2. Department of Defense, Unified Command Plan 201.
3. Joint Publication 1-02 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, January 2012).

4. U.S. Army Africa, Security Cooperation Briefing, September 2010.
5. U.S. Army Africa Assessment Brief, November 2010.
6. National Security Strategy.
7. NATO website, <www.isaf.nato.int> (15 October 2011).